

VII

COMMUNIST TECHNIQUES IN ESTABLISHING AND EXPLOITING
THE WORLD FEDERATION OF TRADE UNIONS (WFTU)

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INTRODUCTION

The Communist-controlled World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) is the international front through which the USSR coordinates its propaganda and tactics in the field of labor in the free world.

Consisting of a headquarters in Vienna's Soviet sector, regional offices, and affiliated unions, the WFTU has a claimed total membership exceeding eighty millions. Its actual numerical strength, which in any case is concentrated in the Soviet-Satellite countries, is much smaller than the claim. Nevertheless, the WFTU is a threat to the stability of non-Communist countries, for its main objective is to create broad popular support for the Soviet/Communist program under the disguise of a "labor unity" drive.

As a vital arm of Soviet power, the WFTU is very closely controlled by the USSR. Its policies are made in Moscow, and most of its funds are derived from affiliated unions in the Soviet bloc, where trade unions are simply instruments of the government.

The WFTU is a typical Communist front in that it pretends to be "democratic" and "independent". It has never openly identified itself as a Communist organization. On the contrary, it claims to be the only genuine trade union international representing all workers, regardless of political or religious belief. In this guise it attempts to unite a large number of rank and file non-Communists under its control to support Communist objectives.

In what the Communists refer to as the "underdeveloped areas" the WFTU is important as an organizing instrument for Communism, effective through its distribution of literature, financial aid, the work of its organizers, and its influence on some key individuals.

I. DEVELOPMENT OF THE WFTU AS A COMMUNIST-FRONT ORGANIZATION

The WFTU was founded in 1945, mainly through the efforts of the USSR, and most of the important trade unions of the world, both Communist and non-Communist became members. From the very beginning it was, to a large extent, controlled by the Communists and employed as an instrument of their policies.

When Germany invaded the USSR in June 1941, the USSR was forced into the war on the side of Great Britain, and the pre-war isolation of the Soviet and Communist trade unions from the democratic labor movement came to an end.

In October 1941 a joint Anglo-Soviet Trade Union Committee was formed to exchange views and information on problems of common interest arising out of the war. The USSR put constant pressure on the British Trade Union Congress to expand this committee to include representatives of the labor movement in other countries, thus laying the groundwork for a new labor international. So sure were the Communists of their strength, and so heavily did they emphasize the theme of international labor unity, that they were willing to invite strongly anti-Communist labor organizations.

Reluctantly, and with some reservations, the British Trade Union Congress sent out invitations to a world conference of trade unions, which met in London in February 1945. This conference was the first definite step toward the establishment of the WFTU, although it was not actually founded until the fall of 1945 at a conference in Paris.

Apart from the important role that the working class plays in Communist doctrine, Soviet interest in the formation of the WFTU can be explained by several additional factors. First, the USSR was looking to the future and wanted an international trade union organization which would present it with opportunities to influence the trade unions of other countries. Secondly, it had every desire to bring to a permanent end its isolation from the international trade union movement and to prevent the re-emergence of the pre-war International Federation of Trade Unions, which had refused membership to Soviet trade unions on the grounds that they were not free unions, but instruments of the state.

Since the USSR and its satellites include virtually their entire industrial population in their trade unions, the membership of these unions and consequently their representation in the directing bodies of the WFTU was very large. At the Paris Congress, due to the graded voting system of the WFTU Constitution, the USSR and her European satellites alone had about 300 out of a total of 975 votes. In addition, the Soviet unions could count on steady support from the Communist-dominated French and Italian affiliates, with 101 and 102 votes respectively, and on many votes from the Latin American, Middle and Far Eastern trade unions.

The Communists thus had a clear and preponderant majority of votes in the WFTU Congress and also in the General Council. More important, and typical of the Communist approach to the control of an organization, was their seizure of control of the permanent WFTU Secretariat. Louis SALIANT, Secretary of the General Confederation of Labor (France), was elected Secretary General, and soon revealed himself to be a partisan of Communism. From the outset the Secretariat was packed with his followers.

In the beginning, the Communists adopted the tactic of the "united front from above", and sought to bring into the WFTU the largest possible number of trade union federations, while at the same time maintaining the appearance of a non-partisan labor organization.

Beginning in about 1947, they gradually shifted to their present policy of the "united front from below", and began accusing leaders of non-Communist trade unions of being traitors to the working class and lackeys of "Wall Street imperialism". The Communists gradually became more forthright in asserting their propaganda line and in disregarding the feelings of the democratic member organizations. Thus, cooperation with the leadership of the democratic unions became less of a Communist objective in the WFTU and, at the same time, became increasingly difficult.

It is apparent that for some time after its foundation the WFTU played the role that was expected of it by the USSR. The USSR had intended it to be an organization that could pose as the representative, not of world Communism, but of world labor of all political opinions, and yet would follow Communist policies. The non-Communist trade unions within the WFTU were thus used to endorse and provide respectability to Communist objectives.

It soon became obvious to the non-Communists that they were reduced to playing this part, and while they were disturbed by this development it was difficult for them to protest. Since the Communists had a majority and a firm policy, objecting non-Communists could always be accused of being "trouble makers", and, especially, of threatening or betraying the unity of the working class. Since "unity" was popular, no organization felt that it could afford to be subjected to such accusations. Having made relatively minor commitments by joining the WFTU, the non-Communist unions were forced to make major political concessions as the price of continuing membership.

A situation in which independently powerful non-Communist trade union centers were increasingly exploited, and even abused, by the organization of which they were members, was in the long run untenable.

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Any hope of permanently separating trade union issues from political issues, or of Communists and non-Communists cooperating on a non-political basis, proved illusory.

No sharp cleavage between Communist and non-Communist forces appeared, however, until the announcement of the Marshall Plan. Following the lead of the Soviet Union, SAILLANT denounced the plan in the name of the WFTU. The anti-Communist trade union leaders immediately protested. Subsequent divisions over the Marshall Plan finally strained the unity of the WFTU to the breaking point, although the split did not finally occur until January 1949. By 1950 all the democratic affiliates had withdrawn.

The split in the WFTU was undoubtedly inevitable. In a sense, it was a set-back for the Communists, since it marked the end of their opportunity to operate under the guise of a united international labor movement. However, the WFTU had fulfilled the initial Soviet goal of ending the isolation of Soviet trade unions from world labor.

Following the split, the Communists retained the physical equipment of the WFTU and whatever prestige was attached to its name as the representative of international labor. The WFTU has sought to exploit this prestige ever since by consistently referring to the unions that seceded from it (and to the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions formed by them) as "splitters" and "paid tools" of reactionary government and employer interests.

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II. SOVIET/COMMUNIST EXPLOITATION OF THE WFTU

From the beginning, the Communists have exploited the WFTU in the Soviet interest. During the early days when the WFTU was following a policy of cooperation with non-Communist elements, Communist objectives were limited to those which had a surface appeal to wide circles of non-Communist labor, and which could easily be endorsed by them. Examples of this were the WFTU declarations against the Franco regime, the suppression of trade union rights, and racial discrimination. No resolution was permitted to reflect unfavorably on the USSR, but many were sharply ^{critical} of US and British actions.

The general opposition of trade unions to colonialism, and their traditional sympathy for the efforts of unorganized workers to unionize, including those in the colonial countries, furnished another issue on which Communist aims could be served without risking loss of support of the Western trade unions. By calling for WFTU attention to the situation of the workers in these areas, the Communists sought to attain the twin objectives of demonstrating their concern for such peoples, (thus gaining their sympathy), and at the same time stirring up unrest.

Other activity in this field included the sending of WFTU delegations to Japan, Korea, and Iran in 1947 which aided Soviet objectives in these countries, both by the propaganda statements issued by the delegations, and by lending the weight of the WFTU's prestige to the local Communists. Since that time, the sending of delegations to various countries of the world, ostensibly to study labor conditions, has become an established practice of the WFTU.

After the split in the WFTU, the Communists sought to gain strength at the expense of non-Communists by attempting to win over their following. This consisted largely of accusing non-Communist labor leaders of being traitors to their followers. At the same time they made numerous offers of cooperation with leaders of non-Communist labor movements, knowing full well that such offers would be rejected. Rejection of such offers, however, permitted the WFTU to allege that such leaders were "enemies of the working class", "lackeys of imperialism", and, above all, "splitters" of the unity of the working class.

In recent years, the WFTU has followed a "unity of action" tactic, and has sought to attract non-Communists by inviting them to cooperate for the attainment of certain common objectives, such as "peace", the banning of weapons of mass destruction, "anti-imperialism", etc. By posing as the champions of such demands, the WFTU apparently hopes to win additional adherents at the expense of the democratic labor unions.

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III. ROLE OF THE WFTU IN THE "UNDERDEVELOPED" COUNTRIES

The WFTU was quick to recognize that the so-called "under-developed" areas of the world offered a potentially fertile ground for the exploitation of discontented groups in these areas for their own purposes. its

In virtually all of these areas, trade unionism was extremely weak, and in many cases it existed only in opposition to the colonial administration, or ^{to} their local governments.

After the split in the WFTU in 1949, which severely limited the possibilities of expansion in eastern Europe and North America, the WFTU began turning its attention more and more toward the "under-developed" countries of the world.

To create unrest in these areas has been one of the WFTU's major goals and it has attempted to blame "imperialism" for all the ills of the population which, according to the WFTU, is suffering from the "double yoke of local and foreign exploiters."

One of the most significant WFTU-sponsored meetings, insofar as the Asiatic countries were concerned, was the Trade Union Conference of the Asian and Australasian Countries held in Peiping in the latter part of 1949.

This conference, ostensibly a trade union conference, was used as a forum to proclaim to the Asian Communist Parties that the Chinese path to victory was to be the model for "colonial and semi-colonial" countries, and ^{to} dispelled for all time any doubt as to the political nature of the WFTU.

In the keynote address to the Conference the Chinese chairman, Liu Shao-chi, declared:

"The path taken by the Chinese people to defeat imperialism and its lackeys and to establish the People's Republic of China is the path that should be taken by the peoples of the various colonial and semi-colonial countries in their fight for national independence and People's Democracy."

This Chinese path was then defined by Liu as consisting of the following points:

"1. The working class must unite with all other classes, parties and groups, organizations and individuals who are willing to oppose the oppression of imperialism and its lackeys, to form a nation-wide united front and ready to wage a resolute struggle against imperialism and its lackeys.

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"2. This nationwide united front must be led by the working class which opposes imperialism most resolutely, most courageously and most unselfishly and by its political party, the Communist Party, both of which must become the center of this front. It cannot be led by the wavering and compromising national bourgeoisie or the petty bourgeoisie and their political parties.

"3. In order to enable the working class and its political party, the Communist Party, to become the center for uniting all the national, anti-imperialist forces and successfully to lead the national united front to victory, it is necessary to build up through patient struggle a Communist Party equipped with the theory of Marxism-Leninism, a Party mastering strategy and tactics, a Party practicing self-criticism and strict discipline and which is closely linked with the masses.

"4. It is necessary to set up wherever and whenever possible a people's liberation army led by the Communist Party, an army which is powerful and skillful in fighting enemies, as well as strong points for the operations of these armies and also to coordinate the mass struggles in the enemy-controlled areas with the armed struggle. Moreover, armed struggle is the main form of struggle in the national liberation struggle in many colonies and semi-colonies."

The fact that this speech was delivered at a WFTU-sponsored conference and that it was promptly published in the Soviet press and the Cominform Journal (30 December 1949), and endorsed editorially by the latter on 27 January 1950, made it quite clear that the Chinese claim had the support and approval of Moscow, and that it was the path to be taken by the various Asian Communist Parties.

There is no reason to believe that the principle of the armed struggle as outlined by Lin has been disavowed by the Asian Communist Parties. However, a more realistic appraisal of the situation in many of these countries has since indicated that conditions were not favorable to the armed struggle. As a result the armed struggle has been de-emphasized in favor of the current "united front".

At the Third Congress held in October 1953, the WFTU again placed emphasis on these areas.

In the resolution on the "Development of the Trade Union Movement in the Colonial and Semi-Colonial Countries" (the third item on the agenda), the WFTU reaffirmed its solidarity with the workers of these countries, and stated that the tasks of the trade unions were to pay more attention to recruitment, to the organization of basic trade union units, to the development of trade unions among agricultural and plant-

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tation workers, and to organize on a national scale industry by industry.

Particular emphasis was placed on the training of cadres, which was regarded as being particularly important in these countries.

The resolution further stated that the WFTU had already assisted trade union organizations in these countries, and would in the future do so on an even larger scale.

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IV. THE WFTU AS A DIRECTING AND COORDINATING CENTER

The Secretariat of the WFTU, located in Vienna, organizes, coordinates and implements the activities of the WFTU on an international scale. Its staff is permanent and under the direction of the Secretary General.

In short, the Secretariat directs and controls the activities of the WFTU's many components. It transforms the written directives of the Executive Bureau, which in turn receives its directives from Moscow, into positive actions.

One of the most significant activities of the WFTU is in the propaganda field. The various WFTU publications, especially its periodicals, are important as a means of keeping Communist trade union functionaries throughout the world informed of the current propaganda line to be followed. The work of coordinating and editing WFTU publications is performed at the Vienna headquarters.

In 1954, the WFTU introduced a new propaganda medium by producing a film entitled, the "Song of the Rivers". This film has already been shown in a number of European capitals, and it is anticipated that it will be shown in other areas of the world in the near future.

Another important function of the WFTU Secretariat is the arranging and technical planning of international labor meetings. Such ~~functions~~ ^{arrangements} include procuring of meeting places, translators, interpreters, financial arrangements, including the subsidization of national delegations, and far advance publicity.

Such meetings, while largely of a propaganda nature, are important in providing general directives for future action, and in pointing out weaknesses and possible improvements of work in the trade union field.

Regional meetings, sponsored or co-sponsored by the WFTU, serve the additional purpose of publicizing the WFTU's concern for a particular area and of influencing trade unions within the area.

In addition to organizing its own gatherings, the WFTU also arranges visits of trade union delegations from one country to another. One of the most recent was the visit of thirty-five Japanese trade unionists to France and Italy. During their visit to Europe they were received by the WFTU Secretariat in Vienna, and also visited the USSR and China before returning home.

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The "Solidarity Fund" of the WFTU is also used by the Secretariat to support strike actions and demonstrations both by WFTU affiliates and non-affiliated unions over which the Communists hope to increase their influence. The "Solidarity Fund" was created at the Second Congress of the WFTU in 1949, and was to be made up from "voluntary payments" of trade union organizations, members, and others supporting the working class in its struggle.

It is noteworthy that in sections of the world where national unions are not yet highly developed, such as in areas described by the Communists as "colonial, semi-colonial and underdeveloped areas", the national unions in these countries are often dependent on the Secretariat for both moral and financial support.

In other fields, the WFTU ~~cooperates~~ coordinates its activities with the other international Communist fronts, such as the Women's International Democratic Federation, the World Federation of Democratic Youth, the International Union of Students, the World Federation of Scientific Workers and, above all, with the World Peace Council. As an example, they co-sponsor meetings, send each other messages of support, send delegates to each other's meetings, and exchange information and literature.

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V. WFTU REGIONAL LIAISON BUREAUS

At the Second World Congress in July 1949, the executive bodies of the WFTU were called upon to seriously consider the setting up of Regional Liaison Bureaus in those parts of the world where they may be considered "necessary for the improvement of the conditions of life of the working class and the development of trade unions." (The Confederation of Workers of Latin America (CTAL), founded in 1938, had been previously designated as the body linking and coordinating the WFTU and the National Centers of Latin America).

At the Executive Bureau meeting of the WFTU held in Peiping, 11-14 November 1949, it was decided to set up a WFTU Liaison Bureau with the trade unions of the Asian and Australasian countries and a similar bureau with the trade unions of African countries. According to the Executive Bureau, the purpose of these liaison bureaus was to consolidate the unity of the working class of all countries, improve the exchange of experiences and information, and give practical assistance to the trade unions meeting with difficult conditions.

Among the principal functions of the liaison bureaus, as outlined by the Executive Bureau, were the following:

- a. To assist the trade union organizations to explain and carry out WFTU decisions.
- b. To propagandize the aims and objectives of the WFTU, and to circulate information on its activity.
- c. To recruit new members for the WFTU.
- d. To keep the WFTU informed on the development of the trade union movement in the countries concerned.

The liaison bureaus were instructed to submit a complete report on their activities every three months to the Secretary General of the WFTU, and the Secretariat was instructed to advise continuously the members of the liaison bureaus, and furnish all the necessary support.

There is no information to indicate that the African Liaison Bureau ever actually came into existence.

The Asian and Australasian Liaison Bureau began functioning in about mid-1950, with headquarters in Peiping. While the original Executive Bureau decision stated that it would be composed of representatives from India, China, USSR and Australia, representatives from other Asian countries have been reported at various times to be working in the bureau. As of June 1954, CHEN-Yu of China was the Secretary General.

Present information indicates that the bureau has been unable to properly fulfill the functions assigned to it by the WFTU. Its activities have been largely limited to the occasional distribution of propaganda materials.

The WFTU still considers regional liaison bureaus to be important, however. One of the recommendations of the Third Congress of the WFTU to the executive bodies was that they insure the development of such bureaus. No information is presently available as to what concrete steps have been taken to further implement and improve the work of these bureaus.